

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Hollow Contracting, Staging /Camping LUL Proposal
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	May, 2013
<b>Proponent:</b>	Hollow Contracting
<b>Location:</b>	Section 28, Township 5 South – Range 9 West
<b>County:</b>	Beaverhead County

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Hollow Contracting out of Butte, MT has applied for a Land Use License (LUL) for the use of an existing gravel pit on state land near the Birch Creek exit 12 miles north of Dillon to use as a staging and camping area while doing road construction work on the I-15 Freeway corridor near Dillon. The area would be used for fueling and staging of equipment and a number of folks will put campers at the site for a sleeping area at night. Porta-potties would be delivered to the site for use while people are using the area for staging and camping. The area will be kept in a clean and orderly manner while in use.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

*Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.*

Patrick Renee MT DNRC Archeologist  
Beaverhead County Road Department  
Beaverhead County Commissioners  
Marchesseault RanchAc  
NRIS Search

#### 2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

None

#### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

**A. Action Alternative:** Grant a LUL to Hollow Contracting to use the apex gravel pit on state land as a camping staging area during road construction on the I-15 corridor near Dillon.

**B. No Action Alternative:** Deny a LUL to Hollow Contracting to use the apex gravel pit on state land as a camping staging area during road construction on the I-15 corridor near Dillon.

### III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

#### 4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

*Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.*

Beaverhead County currently has a gravel permit at this location. The county was contacted and agreed to allow Hollow Construction to use the pit as a staging / camping area. This activity will not interfere with the road department's operations. The county also has an existing LUL for the storage of asphalt at the pit location. The contractor will be delivering a fresh stockpile of asphalt at no charge to the county for use in future projects.

The soils where the gravel pit is located are classified as Bronec- Kalsted gravelly sandy loams as identified by the NRCS soil survey. The area is well drained and rutting is usually not an issue with these types of soils. Soil surveys indicate that the typical profile for such soils are as follows; 0-5 inches soils are gravelly sandy loam, 5-17 inches are very gravelly sandy loam, 17 to 31" very gravelly sandy loam and 31- 60" Extremely gravelly sandy loam.

Top soils have been scraped and stored on the site for reclamation once the storage site is no longer in use. Native grass seed mixture will be spread over the disturbed areas to prevent erosion of the soils when the County is done with the gravel permit.

Land capability classification is listed at 4e. The soils are well drained and stony.

This project should cause no long term or cumulative effects to soils in the existing gravel pit, or area.

#### **5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:**

*Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.*

The existing pit has a water table approximately 15 feet below the ground surface. Tests reveal that the current gravel permit should only be excavated to a depth of 10 to 11 feet. Ground water is located 5 feet below the current elevation of the existing pit. There is a layer of clay that is found at approximately 15 feet.

The pit currently has good water drainage; however there is one area of the pit that has a heavy clay layer probably where in the past gravel was extracted below 12-15 feet. This area can hold surface water after a heavy rain or snow events. The clay area will not be used for camping or staging of equipment. If a license is given the project should not degrade or effect water quality or cause any cumulative effects to water quality.

#### **6. AIR QUALITY:**

*What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.*

The location of the proposed staging/camping area is near an existing subdivision. Currently there has only been one house constructed and it is approximately 1/2 mile from the pit. The nearest town is Dillon located 12 miles south of the proposed location. This proposal would generate some dust during the staging and hauling of asphalt operations. The overall impact to the area would be small. This proposal would not affect long term air quality in Southwest Montana because of the limited size and scope of the proposal.

#### **7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:**

*What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.*

A Montana Heritage NRIS search of the proposed gravel pit site didn't identify any rare plants or cover types. A field evaluation was completed by Chuck Maddox, Dillon Unit Land Use Specialist on October 21 of 2008. In his report Chuck lists the majority of cover type to be Stipa comata, needle –and –thread grass. The majority of the area north of Dillon was broken and farmed in earlier years, teen's to the 1930's. The lack of Agropyron spicatum blue bunch wheat grass remnants on this site indicate that this site was probably farmed as well.

The camping and staging area is currently devoid of vegetation due to it being a gravel pit. The pit will be reclaimed once the gravel pit is finished being used by Beaverhead County. Reclamation work will include back-sloping side slopes and planting native grass species. No rare or sensitive plants have been identified in the pit area or surrounding area. No long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated to vegetation in or around the gravel pit if the license is granted.

#### **8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:**

*Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.*

A NRIS search identified the area as possibly being used by two species of Vertebrate that the BLM has identified as sensitive species; The Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* and Brewer's Sparrow *Spizella breweri*. This project is not anticipated to have any direct, indirect or cumulative effects to these species due to the projects small footprint, and short duration.

#### **9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:**

*Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.*

The Montana Natural Heritage program identified two sensitive species of concern; Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* and Brewer's Sparrow *Spizella breweri*.

**Sage Thrasher** *Oreoscoptes montanus* and **Brewer's Sparrow** *Spizella breweri* have been identified as using an area of approximately 6,400 acres in size just north of this proposal. The two birds have not been identified in the existing pit or the new proposal area. Because the size and scope of this proposal is relatively small (15 acres) compared with the 6,400 acres of suitable habitat acres north of this proposal no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are not anticipated.

#### **10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

*Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.*

Patrick Renee Montana DNRC archeologist was contacted concerning this proposal. His search didn't identify any cultural resource concerns associated with this project.

#### **11. AESTHETICS:**

*Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.*

This proposal would be visible from the I-15 interstate as one drives North and South near mile marker 74. It will also be visible from the Birch Creek County Road. There is a sub division to the north of Birch Creek County Road and an existing house is currently in the subdivision. Road construction however is a common event along the freeway corridor and the staging and camping should not affect the long term aesthetics of the area. No long term or cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated if the license is granted for this proposal.

**12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:**

*Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.*

The area is currently being used as a gravel pit by Beaverhead County and the land around the pit is being grazed by livestock. This is a dry arid location. The staging and camping will have no known effects on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy in this area. This is a temporary use of short duration no long term or cumulative effects are anticipated.

**13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:**

*List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.*

Montana DNRC Dillon Unit doesn't know of any other projects planned for this area other than the EA that was completed for the existing gravel permit granted to Beaverhead County in June, 2010.

**IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION**

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

**14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

This proposal will increase large truck traffic and road construction equipment on the Birch Creek road for an extended period of time. Birch Creek Road can be heavily used by recreationists and wood gathers in the spring and summer and hunters in the fall. Truck hauling signs would need to be erected to warn traffic of heavy truck traffic on the road if the project is permitted. The area is flat and visibility is excellent. The risks to human health and safety associated with this proposal are low, but do exist.

**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

*Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.*

The use of the pit as a staging camping area should not affect the commercial and agricultural activities on the state section. The area could still be used for grazing if the cattle are present, however the gate would need to be closed during this period of use. At this time cattle are not grazing the section.

**16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:**

*Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.*

This project will employ a considerable number of people for a short duration of time in the Dillon area. The proposal would generate a short period of employment in the Dillon area for a number of contractors, however no long term employment will occur due to the granting of this license.

**17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:**

*Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.*

The license would not generate an increase or decrease of tax revenue locally or on a state wide basis.

**18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:**

*Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services.*

Beaverhead County would still be responsible for maintaining the gravel pit, however the licensee would be required to remove all garbage and debris from the staging and camping activities. In addition any fuel spills would need to be reported and cleaned from the site. No additional government services would be required if this license is granted.

**19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:**

*List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.*

None

**20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:**

*Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.*

None

**21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:**

*Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.*

None

**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

None

**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

*How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?*

This proposal would be of short duration and no change in cultural uniqueness and diversity would be anticipated if this license is granted. The contractor will be required to deliver ½ gallon of Milestone chemical to the lessee to prevent the spread of noxious weeds in the area. The lessee can use the chemical for spraying weeds on the site outside of the gravel pit. The County will remain responsible for spraying weeds within the pit.

**24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:**

*Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.*

The license would generate a onetime fee of \$150.00 for the Pine Hills trust if the license is granted.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Tim Egan	<b>Date:</b> 5/10/13
	<b>Title:</b> Dillon Unit Manager	

<b>V. FINDING</b>
-------------------

<b>25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:</b>
----------------------------------

Action Alternative

<b>26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:</b>
---

No impacts were identified and the ground has been previously disturbed.

<b>27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:</b>
---

☐

EIS

☐

More Detailed EA

☒

No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Hoyt Richards
	<b>Title:</b> CLO Area Manager
<b>Signature:</b> /s/ Hoyt Richards	
<b>Date:</b> 5/29/2013	